

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 ACDA-12 SSM-05 NEAE-00 /111 W
-----108988 231709Z /40

P R 231630Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5079
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EG, IS
SUBJECT: INTERVIEW WITH ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER BEGIN

1. THE FOLLOWING INTERVIEW WITH BEGIN APPEARED IN THE JANUARY 23 EDITION OF THE GERMAN WEEKLY MAGAZINE DER SPIEGEL. WE UNDERSTAND IT WAS CONDUCTED ON JANUARY 19 OR 20, I.E., AFTER THE SUSPENSION OF THE JERUSALEM TALKS BUT PRIOR TO THE ISRAELI DECISION AGAINST RETURNING TO THE CAIRO MILITARY NEGOTIATIONS. BEGIN WAS FIRM THROUGHOUT THE INTERVIEW STATING INTER ALIA THAT ISRAEL WOULD NOT ABANDON ITS SETTLEMENTS, AGREE TO THE DIVISION OF JERUSALEM OR WITHDRAW TO THE 1967 BORDERS. BEGIN ACCUSED SADAT OF HAVING DECEIVED HIMSELF INTO THINKING THE ISRAELIS WOULD MAKE CONCESSIONS. BEGIN ALSO STATED THAT HE HAD TOLD SADAT DURING THEIR INITIAL TALKS THAT ISRAEL WOULD CONTINUE TO DEVELOP ITS SETTLEMENTS.

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2. SPIEGEL: MR. PRIME MINISTER, WHAT HAPPENED?
WHY DID PRESIDENT SADAT SUDDENLY DECIDE TO CALL BACK HIS NEGOTIATING TEAM?

BEGIN: I DON'T KNOW. IT WAS A GREAT SURPRISE FOR ME AND MY GOVERNMENT BUT, MOST OF ALL, FOR THE EGYPTIAN REPRESENTATIVES HERE.

3. SPIEGEL: BUT YOU MUST HAVE SOME EXPLANATION...

BEGIN: AT THE MOMENT, I HAVE NONE. MY OPINION, HOWEVER, IS AS FOLLOWS: PRESIDENT SADAT NO DOUBT DECEIVED HIMSELF BY THINKING WE WOULD YIELD ON IMPORTANT MATTERS. HOWEVER, HE HAS LONG BEEN AWARE OF OUR VIEWS. HE KNEW THAT WE WOULD NEVER AGREE TO A RETURN TO A DIVIDED JERUSALEM, THAT WE WOULD NOT RETURN TO THE 1967 BORDERS, AND THAT WE WOULD NEVER GIVE UP OUR SETTLEMENTS IN JUDEA, SAMARIA AND THE GAZA STRIP. OUR POSITION WAS ALWAYS THE FOLLOWING: IF PRESIDENT SADAT WANTS TO COME TO JERUSALEM TO DEBATE THESE QUESTIONS HE HAS EVERY RIGHT TO DO SO. WE, HOWEVER, HAVE NO INTENTION WHATSOEVER OF CHANGING THE FOREGOING POSITIONS.

4. SPIEGEL: TENSION WAS ALREADY APPARENT WHEN FOREIGN MINISTER KAMEL ARRIVED. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT SADAT'S PRESENT MOVE WAS PLANNED IN ADVANCE?

BEGIN: NO, NO, NOT AT ALL. YOU ARE CORRECT REGARDING FOREIGN MINISTER KAMEL. HE WAS VERY NERVOUS AND...

5. SPIEGEL: IT IS STILL NOT CLEAR WHY THE EGYPTIANS WERE RECALLED. WHAT IS YOUR HYPOTHESIS?
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BEGIN: IN MY OPINION, THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT FOUND IT NECESSARY TO DRAMATIZE THE SITUATION. PLEASE UNDERSTAND ME, I HAVE DEEP FEELINGS OF FRIENDSHIP FOR SADAT.

6. SPIEGEL: STILL?

BEGIN: YES. THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT BELIEVED WE WOULD GIVE IN TO THEIR DEMANDS. HOWEVER, WHEN WE WERE UNWILLING TO NEGOTIATE ABOUT THINGS WHICH WE SIMPLY COULDN'T BARGAIN OVER, THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT AGAIN ATTEMPTED TO PRODUCE A CLIMATE OF TENSION AND DRAMATIZE THE ATMOSPHERE. AND NOT JUST HERE BUT ALSO IN AMERICA AND EUROPE. THE EGYPTIANS THOUGHT THIS WOULD WEAKEN US. HOWEVER, NO ONE IN THE WORLD IS IN A POSITION TO PRESSURE US.

7. SPIEGEL: NOT EVEN AMERICA?

BEGIN: NOT EVEN AMERICA. BELIEVE ME, I HAD PRESENTED OUR PEACE PLAN TO PRESIDENT CARTER AND MESSRS. VANCE AND CALLAGHAN. FOR PRESIDENT CARTER, AND EVERYONE

KNOWS THIS, IT WAS "AN ASTONISHINGLY FLEXIBLE PLAN."

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P R 231630Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5080
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
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I WON'T MENTION WHAT CARTER ALSO SAID TO ME ALONE.
AND NOW THE EGYPTIANS CLAIM THAT THIS FLEXIBLE PLAN
HAS BECOME INFLEXIBLE.

8. SPIEGEL: ON ACCOUNT OF THE SETTLEMENTS? DIDN'T
YOU INDICATE THAT YOU WOULD BE CONCILIATORY AT LEAST
REGARDING THE SINAI SETTLEMENTS?

BEGIN: NEVER. TAKE A LOOK AT THE MAP. SEE THE NARROW
STRIP OF LAND ON THE COAST NEAR EL-ARISCH. WE HAVE
SETTLED THERE AND WE WILL NEVER LEAVE.

9. SPIEGEL: WHAT WAS THE BASIS OF SADAT'S HOPE THAT
YOU WOULD YIELD?

BEGIN: I WILL SAY IT ONCE AGAIN, HE DECEIVED HIMSELF
INTO THINKING WE WOULD.

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10. SPIEGEL: AND YOU NEVER LET SADAT THINK THAT THESE MATTERS WERE UP FOR DISCUSSION?

BEGIN: ABSOLUTELY NOT. FROM THE START OF OUR TALKS I SAID WE WOULD NEVER LEAVE OUR PEOPLE DEFENSELESS.

11. SPIEGEL: AND WHAT WAS HIS RESPONSE?

BEGIN: I CANNOT TELL YOU. I DO NOT WISH TO QUOTE HIM. BUT I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT HE NEVER OBJECTED TO THIS PRINCIPLE. AND I ALSO TOLD HIM THAT WE WOULD CONTINUE TO DEVELOP OUR SETTLEMENTS.

12. SPIEGEL: AND HE DID NOT PROTEST LOUDLY?

BEGIN: NOT AT ALL. NOT AT ALL. ON THE CONTRARY. AS I SAID BEFORE I CANNOT REPEAT THE WORDS OF MY GOOD FRIEND SADAT BUT THE SENSE OF WHAT HE SAID WAS: WE WILL ESTABLISH SEVERAL COMMISSIONS IN ORDER TO MAKE PROGRESS IN THE DIRECTION OF PEACE. DON'T FORGET THAT HE KNEW EXACTLY WHAT OUR VIEWS WERE WHEN HE DECIDED TO COME TO JERUSALEM. AN EGYPTIAN ARMY WILL NEVER BE PERMITTED TO TRANSIT THE MOUNTAIN PASSES IN THE SINAI. TWO MONTHS HAVE NOW PAST, AND WHAT OUR MILITARY PEOPLE IN CAIRO HAVE HEARD HAS NOTHING IN COMMON WITH SADAT'S PROMISES. NOW THEY WANT TO MILITARIZE THE SINAI AGAIN. WE WANT TO DEMILITARIZE THIS AREA.

13. SPIEGEL: DO YOU THINK THE NEGOTIATIONS (IN JERUSALEM) WITH THE EGYPTIANS WILL BE RESUMED?

BEGIN: YES, YES. I BELIEVE THEY WILL. I AM AN UNCLASSIFIED

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OPTIMIST.
STOESSEL

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